



CHEL TENHAM

BOROUGH COUNCIL

Notice of a meeting of Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Monday, 3 November 2014
6.00 pm
Pittville Room - Municipal Offices

Membership	
Councillors:	Tim Harman (Chair), Colin Hay (Vice-Chair), Nigel Britter, Chris Mason, Sandra Holliday, Helena McCloskey, Dan Murch, John Payne, Chris Ryder and Max Wilkinson

The Council has a substitution process and any substitutions will be announced at the meeting

Agenda

1.		APOLOGIES	
2.		DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST	
3.		MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING 8 September 2014	(Pages 1 - 8)
4.		PUBLIC AND MEMBER QUESTIONS, CALLS FOR ACTION AND PETITIONS	
5.		MATTERS REFERRED TO COMMITTEE	
6.		FEEDBACK FROM OTHER SCRUTINY MEETINGS ATTENDED Gloucestershire Health Community and Care O&S Committee to be held on 11 November - update from Councillor Clucas Police and Crime Panel held on 24 September and to be held on 6 November - update from Councillor McCloskey Gloucestershire Scrutiny Group held on 3 October – update from Councillor Tim Harman	
7.		CABINET BRIEFING Cabinet Member Corporate Services to update on Information Security Policy and Revised Procurement Strategy	

8.		ALLOTMENTS SCRUTINY TASK GROUP Update from the Green Space and Allotment Officer (Fiona Warin)	(Pages 9 - 14)
9.		CHELTENHAM SPA RAILWAY STATION Presentation by Jeremy Williamson (Cheltenham Development Task Force)	
10.		LGA PEER REVIEW Feedback from the LGA Peer Review relating to Overview and Scrutiny	(Pages 15 - 16)
11.		UPDATES FROM SCRUTINY TASK GROUPS	(Pages 17 - 18)
12.		REVIEW OF SCRUTINY WORKPLAN	(Pages 19 - 20)
13.		DATE OF NEXT MEETING 12 January 2015	

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Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Monday, 8th September, 2014

6.00 - 8.20 pm

Attendees	
Councillors:	Tim Harman (Chair), Colin Hay (Vice-Chair), Nigel Britter, Chris Mason, Sandra Holliday, Dan Murch, Chris Ryder, Max Wilkinson, Adam Lillywhite (Reserve) and Rob Reid (Reserve)
Also in attendance:	Councillor Jon Walklett (Cabinet Member Corporate Services), Paul Evans, Wayne Ellis and Paul Dennison (Severn Trent), Chris Riley (Gloucestershire Highways) and Rob Bell (Ubico)

Minutes

1. APOLOGIES

Councillors McCloskey and Payne had given their apologies. Councillors Reid and Lillywhite attended as their respective substitutes.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Ryder declared an 'other' interest in agenda item 8 (Severn Trent – update on works in Cheltenham) as a member of Cheltenham in Bloom who were in receipt of funding from Severn Trent.

3. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the last meeting had been circulated with the agenda.

Councillor Murch referred members to agenda item 11 of the minutes (End of year performance report) and the commitment from officers to circulate more information regarding the percentage of licensed premises inspections undertaken. To his knowledge this information had not been circulated.

Upon a vote it was unanimously

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on the 9 July 2014 be agreed and signed as an accurate record.

4. PUBLIC AND MEMBER QUESTIONS, CALLS FOR ACTIONS AND PETITIONS

None had been received.

5. MATTERS REFERRED TO COMMITTEE

No matters had been referred to the committee.

6. FEEDBACK FROM OTHER SCRUTINY MEETINGS ATTENDED

Councillor McCloskey had given her apologies and had therefore prepared a written update, which is attached at Appendix 1.

Councillor Clucas provided feedback from an earlier meeting of the Health and Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee. She explained that the committee had considered a range of topics and commented that her feeling was that such a sizeable agenda had made it difficult to discuss important issues to the degree to which she felt was necessary. Topics covered included;

- There had been a significant increase in the number of concerns being raised in relation to the safeguarding of adults in the period 2013/14. A 96% increase from 65 in 2012/13 up to 903 in 2013/14, however, this did seem to be plateauing with 108 reports in the first quarter of this year. Members of the committee had been in agreement that they would rather concerns were reported and no issues identified rather than not.
- The Integrated Safeguarding Structure would be operational by the end of next year. Members had been assured that in future Borough and County Councillors would be given details of any safeguarding issues that had arisen during an event in their ward in a more timely manner; in order that they could be better prepared for any press enquiries that they might receive.
- The configuration of the emergency services, particularly in Cheltenham was a concern. The threat to the Trust was significant as there had not been enough middle ranking doctors to monitor junior doctors but this gap had been filled by Consultants for the time being. Councillor Clucas had been concerned to hear that it was not possible to involve GP's as she was aware that this solution had been used in other areas.
- A CCG report had revealed that there had been an increase in June and July of almost 500 calls to the Gloucestershire Ambulance Service.
- Members had been assured that if and when an operation was cancelled, another date would be provided before the patient left the ward and if not, within 28 days.
- There had been an increase of 25% in malignancy referrals as a result of breast screening.
- DEMOS were looking at the provision of social care with an increasing aging population. Councillor Clucas would be interested to consider the findings of this report once it had been completed.
- Supervisors had been tasked with looking at frequent callers to the ambulance service and identifying where alternative and more appropriate support could be offered.
- The non-emergency transport service was not meeting it's KPI's.
- There was no GP from Cheltenham at the CCG. A GP from North Cotswolds was currently representing Cheltenham but it was anticipated that this would soon change.
- There were concerns about some of the decisions taken by the CCG regarding the out of hours service. Lay members of the Board would attend a future meeting of the committee and explain the process.

The Chairman thanked Councillors McCloskey and Clucas for the updates provided.

7. CABINET BRIEFING

The Cabinet briefing had been circulated in advance of the meeting.

The Cabinet Member Corporate Services, Councillor Walklett, gave apologies on behalf of the Leader, who had been prevented from attending. He talked through each of the items on the briefing and invited feedback from the committee.

There was consensus amongst members of the committee that there was no need and little value to undertake joint scrutiny of the new management agreement for CBH. Members were comfortable with the changes that were being proposed and satisfied that CBH would continue to keep members informed.

Councillor Hay, who had previously held the position of Observer on Ubico's Board, offered the committee his view. He felt that the Board focussed on the contract and how to deliver it rather than taking a wider view and considering in which direction waste collection would be moving over the coming years and what was needed to meet those future requirements. He was of the opinion that members were best placed to provide a broader and political view on the future, but also, that any such member should be a member of the Board rather than simply an observer. It was accepted by all members that having observers from each partner on the Ubico Board would become impractical with the addition of new partners going forward. However, members were reluctant to sever any link between the Board and elected representatives and agreed with the suggestion from Councillor Mason that two members representing all partner authorities could be a satisfactory compromise.

Members agreed with the principle of a 2020 Vision Member Advisory Group but decided against making a decision at this stage as they did not consider that there was any urgency to do so. The Chairman, along with Councillors Hay and Payne would discuss this matter outside of the meeting.

The Cabinet Member Corporate Services would take forward the committees feedback on these issues.

8. SEVERN TRENT - UPDATE ON WORKS IN CHELTENHAM

Three representatives from Severn Trent (Paul Evans, Wayne Ellis and Paul Dennison) attended the meeting, as well as an officer from Gloucestershire Highways, Chris Riley.

The representatives from Severn Trent talked through the PowerPoint presentation (attached at Appendix 2). As part of their business plan, Severn Trent recognised the impact that sewer flooding had on their customers. Over the last two years survey and analysis of the sewers in Cheltenham had been undertaken, which had identified sections of sewer that could no longer meet demands and posed the risk of sewer flooding. Investment of £6million would largely involve the replacement of existing sewers with much larger pipes and 15 projects would reduce the risk of sewer flooding to 52 properties. In developing a strategic solution, projects were batched together into geographical areas. Whilst this had resulted in a wider presence in the area than would be the norm, it also allowed for multiple site working which had helped with the planning of road closures and ultimately reduced the timescale of the overall project. In talking through the programme of current and future work, members were advised that work at some sites was almost complete,

with a number of sites due for completion ahead of schedule. Work to Lansdown Road was deferred after unforeseen services were located during initial works. This decision was taken so that the road could be re-opened whilst Severn Trent reviewed their options. One solution that was being explored with Dean Close School was the option to run the last 100 metres of the project through the School property and discussions were ongoing. Members were assured that Severn Trent were meeting their obligations and compensating businesses. They did however admit that there were some lessons learnt in the Tivoli area. Their commitment to the community extended to financial support for the recent 'Souk in the Suffolks' and the Cheltenham half marathon.

Before inviting questions from the committee, the Chairman referred members to the questions which had been submitted in writing, by Councillor Wilkinson (attached at Appendix 3). In response to the answers that had been provided to his written questions, Councillor Wilkinson commented that the business specific banners seemed to be an after-thought and that he felt there was a need for more support of back street businesses. In a supplementary to question 4, he asked why temporary permits weren't issued to the residents in Andover Street which would have allowed them to park in adjoining streets for the duration of the road closure. Severn Trent confirmed that there had been dialogue between all involved but no solution could be reached. This was a learning point and in future, discussions would start earlier.

Representatives from Severn Trent, along with an Officer from Gloucestershire Highways and Ubico, provided the following answers to member questions:

- Severn Trent's Compensation Manager had provided assistance to a number of businesses with their claims, of which a number had already been received and were either being processed or had already been finalised. The relationship that had been built with the Suffolk traders was a good example of the relationships that Severn Trent endeavoured to achieve during such works.
- The start date for work in Lichfield Drive had been deferred until the 15 September to enable the School to circulate leaflets to the students. These had been provided by Severn Trent and were being circulated by the School.
- Severn Trent, Gloucestershire Highways and Stagecoach were looking closely at the options for Canterbury Way, with one option being a temporary one way system. There was ongoing dialogue to ensure delivery of schemes with minimised impact on residents. Any parking restrictions would be communicated to residents by Severn Trent and with signage on the road itself.
- Road closures for essential works did pose issues to waste collections and whilst these road closures were communicated to Ubico, it was not always possible to gain safe access. A press release had asked residents that were affected by road closures to leave their bins out if they had not been emptied so that crews could make repeated attempts to gain safe access and make collections.
- If a site team was made aware of a resident requiring access for a taxi or community bus, it could work with the individual to make the necessary arrangements. Work was usually concentrated on a small

area at a time and it was therefore possible to allow some form of access.

- Gloucestershire County Council held a utilities co-ordination meeting which helped to identify opportunities for joined up working in specific areas.
- Large scale works by utility companies tended to be planned around resurfacing requirements and whilst Gloucestershire Highways endeavoured to protect roads, this did not extend to new supply or repair works. Severn Trent would be undertaking resurfacing to a greater degree than was required, which had been negotiated and funded by Gloucestershire Highways.
- Pre work, which included relocation of the gas and water supplies in Cleeve View and Whaddon Road would start prior to Christmas, with work to commence immediately after. The remaining three public exhibitions for future works would be held at the end of September and would be advertised in due course.
- When an area was identified for works to be undertaken, the process included the identification of alternative and appropriate routes for traffic. If a specific issue was identified (i.e. a School) then this would be documented in a risk assessment and method statement. If no specific issue was identified then this would not necessarily be documented (i.e. traffic cutting through car parks).

The Chairman thanked the representatives from Severn Trent and Gloucestershire Highways for their attendance which was very much appreciated by members. He asked them to maintain dialogue and whilst he didn't imagine it would be necessary for them to attend another meeting of the committee, he did suggest that it may be useful for them to revisit at the end of the process and discuss any lessons learnt.

9. UBICO PERFORMANCE

Rob Bell, Managing Director of Ubico, referred members to the performance update which had been circulated with the agenda.

He highlighted Ubico's financial performance. This was particularly topical as the accounts were being audited by Grant Thornton and whilst this work was not yet complete, indications were that they would be assured. Audit Cotswolds had also found that core financial controls at Ubico were 'satisfactory'. Though there were no audited accounts as yet; members were advised that Ubico had exceeded the financial targets that had been set. There were £184k of savings embedded in the 2013/14 budget which had been achieved and there was also an underspend of £50k. Cumulative savings for Cheltenham were in excess of £1million and £2.5 million for the partnership as whole. Ubico were on target to achieve £5million savings over 5 years.

The Association of Public Service Excellence (APSE) had undertaken independent benchmarking of cost and quality compared to other authorities and found Ubico to provide a good quality service and good value for money putting them in the top quartile for both. Whilst there had been some contract variations of over £10k; since April 2012 there had been no extra work orders raised or invoiced, with Ubico taking the view that if something was within budget, they would simply get on and do it.

He explained that the vision for Ubico was to continue to build performance and reputation and this could include doing work with or for, Tewkesbury Borough, Stroud District, Forest of Dean and West Oxfordshire Councils. No decisions regarding expansion had yet been taken but discussions were proving encouraging and a bigger company would ultimately mean increased savings for Cheltenham through further economies of scale.

The Managing Director of Ubico explained the performance monitoring regime that was in place, which included weekly, monthly, quarterly and ad-hoc meetings with customer services, the Client Liaison Officer, Cabinet members and Scrutiny.

He invited questions on performance and provided the following responses to member questions:

- Recycling in Cheltenham was at 48.71% and Cotswolds at approximately 60% but the two authorities were not like for like, with urban authorities such as Cheltenham struggling to achieve recycling rates similar to those of rural authorities, such as Cotswolds.
- Performance at bring sites had improved since the last scrutiny review and there were occasions when banks appeared to be full but were not (e.g. if someone had stacked card on top or failed to feed it into the bank properly). All businesses were required to have arrangements in place for the collection of their commercial waste and any business found to be using a bring site could be prosecuted. Ubico did not have powers of enforcement and as such any concerns would be reported to the public protection and enforcement team to investigate.
- The plastic scheme was performing well and whilst it was still relatively new, it had proved popular with residents. Because this was simply a trial, there were not spare banks to replace those that needed to be emptied. A report would be taken to Cabinet at some point regarding the future of the plastic scheme and were the trial to continue, more banks would be available.
- There were occasions when an issue was logged as a complaint when it was in fact a request for service (i.e. waste is blown into the road from people on their way to the bring site and residents call for it to be cleared). He commented that 14 days was too long to resolve issues such as this and that he would rather see the target reduced so that the figures were more meaningful. He would raise this with Customer Services when he next met with them.

The Chairman thanked the Managing Director for his update and attendance at the meeting.

10. PUBLIC ART PANEL UPDATE

Wilf Tomaney, the Townscape Manager, introduced the item which had been circulated with the agenda. At the last meeting the Cabinet Member Healthy Lifestyles suggested that the governance and accountability of the panel needed to be reviewed. Item 3.1 of the paper set out a number of the perceived issues regarding the governance and accountability of the panel and a number of options were detailed at item 4. For those members that were not aware, the Townscape Manager explained that the funding available to the panel was

predominantly derived from Section 106 monies, which was location specific, generated from a development site and generally to be spent in the vicinity of that site. Public Art was reviewed by the Social and Community O&S Committee in 2011 and Appendix 2 outlined progress in relation to those recommendations.

The Cabinet Member Healthy Lifestyles advised the committee that her main concern, as the accountable member, was the lack of any form of process for selecting and electing members and clarity regarding lines of authorisation for spending decisions reached. She was however, comfortable that the panel was working effectively.

Members agreed that there were governance issues and were of the opinion that a workshop, to which, Councillors Harman, Payne, Hay, Ryder and all members of the panel should be invited. This workshop would provide clarity as to the issues and how best to resolve them.

The Townscape Manager was due to attend a meeting of the panel on Wednesday (10 September) and would feedback the request that a workshop be arranged.

11. UPDATES FROM SCRUTINY TASK GROUPS

The committee reviewed the scrutiny task group summary and two draft one page strategies which had been circulated with the agenda. The following actions were agreed;

Review of Public Art Governance – An update on progress relating to the recommendations of the STG that were taken to Cabinet in December 2011 had been considered by the committee. Members agreed that a workshop should be arranged in order that all parties could better understand the workings and any missings from the governance arrangements for the Public Art panel.

Pub Closures – A meeting of interested members would be arranged in order that the ambitions and outcomes for the review could be determined.

Cheltenham Railway Station – Members considered the draft one page strategy that had been circulated with the agenda. They agreed that the ambitions and outcomes for the STG remain unchanged. The timescale for the review would be agreed once the task group were clear about the franchise renewal process and timescales associated to that.

Cycling and Walking – Members considered the draft one page strategy that had been circulated with the agenda. They agreed that the ambitions and outcomes for the STG, with the addition of 'The Cheltenham Transport Plan to be considered' to the ambitions.

12. REVIEW OF SCRUTINY WORKPLAN

The committee reviewed the latest version of the work plan, which had been circulated with the agenda.

The work plan would be updated as necessary following this meeting and members were reminded that they could access the document via the intranet.

Councillor Britter asked that 'Integrated Transport' be added to the work plan with a view to possibly setting up a task group to look at the issue, once the cycling & walking and Cheltenham railway station task groups had concluded their work, as they may identify wider issues. This would be added to the work plan under a new heading 'items for a future meeting'.

13. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting was scheduled for Monday 3 November.

Tim Harman
Chairman

Information/Discussion Paper

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

03 November 2014

Progress update on recommendations from Allotments Scrutiny Task Group

A review of allotments was initiated by the Overview and Scrutiny (O & S) Committee in July 2012 and a task group set up with defined terms of reference.

Following a number of meetings and site visits, the report and recommendations of the scrutiny task group were considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 10 January 2013.

The report was considered by Council on 22 February 2013, at which time it was resolved that £600,000 of the Midwinter receipt would be set aside to fund the provision of additional allotments in Cheltenham.

The report was considered by Cabinet on 12 March 2013, at which time it was resolved that the recommendations of the Allotments Scrutiny Task Group would be approved, subject to feasibility and resources, that the Council would enter into new tenancy agreements with allotment holders and it was noted that the O & S committee would undertake a review of the recommendations in 12 months.

A review of the recommendations was carried out in March 2014 and a further review was undertaken in October 2014.

Background

- 1.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee set out to clarify the legal position for allotment provision, both in terms of reviewing the processes for identifying the need for allotments and how this is allocated between parish and non-parish areas. The need for additional provision against available capital receipts was reviewed, as was the Allotments Strategy and the proposals for allotments on Weavers Field. These are detailed within the O & S report.
- 1.2 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee put forward 11 recommendations in their report. It was resolved that the Committee would review the implementation of the recommendations after 12 months.
- 1.3 A further review was undertaken in October 2014. Set out below are the recommendations and the progress to date.

2. Strategic context

- 2.1 The provision of allotments helps to support the Council's aims that people are able to lead healthy lifestyles and that Cheltenham's natural and built environment is enhanced and protected. There is a statutory requirement to provide allotments.

3. Progress against the recommendations

- 3.1 The strength of local opposition to a proposal for a new allotment site should be a key consideration should such a situation arise again (this arose in relation to Weaver's Field).
- 3.2 *As reported in March 2014, the importance of local support for any new allotment site has been*

incorporated into the Council's approach to new provision. This was demonstrated in the consultation for proposed new allotments at Priors Farm. Several hundred local households were leafleted with details of a tentative proposal and feedback was sought via a pre-paid postcard. It was agreed that a positive response would be required in order to take the proposals forward.

3.3 Request Cabinet to pursue the development into allotments of a small part of the farmland owned by the Borough Council at Priors Farm to the north of the borough, not affecting any public rights of way.

3.4 *As reported in March 2014, the Green Space Development team, working with the Property and Asset Management department, undertook mapping and feasibility studies, including consultation with local residents and people on Council waiting lists for allotments. In total, over 80 people expressed initial interest in having an allotment in that location and most of the neighbouring residents responded positively to the proposal.*

3.5 *Further feasibility studies were then carried out in relation to the proposed allotment site being part of considerations for a wider area.*

3.6 *The Council would want to be confident of sustainable future demand for allotments in the area prior to moving forward. However, waiting lists are falling rapidly in most areas of the Borough. With a possible appeal in relation to a planning application for the Leckhampton area (which incorporates additional allotment provision), it is being proposed that additional allotment provision in the Priors area be put on hold for the time being.*

3.7 That the Cabinet Member Sustainability maintains dialogue with the Parish Councils in terms of their responsibilities for addressing allotment waiting lists.

3.8 *As reported in March 2014, the previous Cabinet Member Sustainability had face to face and/or written communication with all the C5 Parish Councils in 2013, discussing the results of the legal enquiries into the issues surrounding allotment provision in parishes.*

3.9 *Allotment related issues continue to be addressed by the Leader via the C5 meetings and the issues around allotment provision are being resolved. The Parish Councils without allotments are being asked to maintain waiting lists of people interested in allotments so that they can evidence demand for plots in relation to any future developments in their areas. The Borough will continue to accept applications from those parish areas on the understanding that priority may be given to non-parish residents.*

3.10 *With declining waiting lists, the pressure on both the parishes and the Borough to explore additional allotment provision is diminishing and it has been agreed that the parishes will be able to input into the next allotment strategy, due to be written in 2015, so that there can be a joined-up approach to allotment provision in the Borough overall.*

3.11 A review of enforcement of uncultivated allotment plots should be undertaken to alleviate the pressure on the waiting list, and that the current tenancy agreement should be revised to enable this and the points raised above to be enforced.

3.12 *The enforcement procedures were reviewed and the main issue identified was that of serial offenders who neglected their allotments but responded to letters of enforcement with a flurry of activity such that they passed the subsequent inspection, only to neglect the plot again afterwards. This could happen many times. A three strikes and out policy was adopted, allowing for an automatic Notice to Quit on the third breach.*

3.13 *New tenancy agreements were issued to all allotment holders in January 2014.*

3.14 *It is recognised that allotment holders usually have good intentions to work their allotments but unrealistic expectations or insufficient capacity to manage an allotment can sometimes be a factor in under-cultivation of plots, as can family illness and circumstance.*

3.15 *A survey of allotment holders will be carried out prior to the writing of the 2015 Allotment Strategy and this will incorporate an opportunity for allotment holders to feedback on the extent to which*

uncultivated allotments are a significant issue at any given site.

3.16 *With waiting lists declining, the pressure on the waiting list has been reduced.*

3.17 The Allotments Officer should endeavour to visit allotment sites more regularly in order to become known to allotment holders and ensure a good rapport is developed to encourage the best working relationship for the improvement of allotment sites.

3.18 *One of the Community Rangers, Janice Payne, is now undertaking weekly visits to allotment sites, having been allocated a half day for allotment related matters. This is in relation to plot inspections and site maintenance matters. The Allotment Officer has found that the demands of allotment administration, especially in light of the additional number of allotment tenancies now managed by the Council, has meant that there has not been much time available to undertake site visits. Also, during working hours, there are limited numbers of allotment holders on site (usually the same ones).*

3.19 Officers felt that *with weekly or sometimes daily contact with some site wardens, issues were quickly identified and resolved and that there is a good rapport between allotment holders and the Council via the wardens and through direct contact. This will be raised in the allotment survey so that the Council can gauge the extent to which allotment holders are happy (or not) with the relationship they have with the Council.*

3.20 *As proposed in March, the allotment officer would like to propose that the site wardens are included in any future review of allotments, as they are integral to the management of the sites and are well placed to comment on the relationship between the Council and its tenants and the effectiveness of Council policies.*

3.21 Additional support for allotments should be considered in the Green Space Development Team

3.22 *As the Cabinet Member Sustainability responded at the Council meeting of 22 February 2013, when the recommendations were discussed, limited resources are available to provide additional support for allotments and the Council would look to achieve its aims with the assistance of the voluntary sector.*

3.23 *In March 2014, the allotment officer reported that the volunteer site wardens had agreed to take on some additional responsibilities and some were contacting applicants off the waiting list to arrange plot viewings, some were organising group viewing sessions where several people could view the available plots at the same time and some have taken on plot measuring and splitting / combining tasks. All of these measures were designed to ensure that high standards could be maintained, given a 45% increase in tenant numbers over the last 6 years.*

3.24 *The survey of allotment holders should give some indication about whether the Council's allotment tenants are satisfied with the way in which the allotment sites and administration are managed.*

3.25 To review current lines of communication with allotment stakeholders and the Council's allotment service

3.26 *As a result of the review, an allotment providers meeting has been established for parish councils and borough council to meet, discuss issues, share approaches etc. The wardens expressed that they were happy with the frequency of the quarterly meetings. The Green Space Development Manager communicated to the local allotment association that they could request meetings when there were issues to discuss or matters that their members would like clarified. Meetings have been duly organised at the Depot, when the allotment association has requested.*

3.27 *It is likely that the writing of the next allotment strategy will see the Council clarify its key stakeholders for allotments and ensure that a structure is in place for input into the new strategy and consultation thereafter.*

3.28 To review the information about what commitment is required by taking on an allotment on the

Council's website and include links to the Allotments Association website and investigate opportunities to introduce online notice and discussion boards.

3.29 *As reported in March 2014, the information on the website was reviewed and a link installed to the National Allotment Society website. Commitment required to work an allotment was discussed at the wardens meeting and the overwhelming response was that the television programmes made it look too easy and it didn't matter how much people were told otherwise, they believed what they saw on the television (that people can manage an allotment in half an hour a week), until it was proven otherwise through actual experience.*

3.30 *A new leaflet was written detailing the commitment required and giving advice on getting started. The existing tick-list was reviewed, with the wardens given the choice of which one they wanted to use when talking to prospective tenants. Both were included in the appendices of the March 2014 review.*

3.31 *The Green Space Development team concluded that there were insufficient internal resources to manage online notice and discussion boards but that the many online allotment Forums fulfilled the function of supplying information and discussion opportunities for new and existing plot holders.*

3.32 That consideration be given to an allotment provision and enhancement policy in the emerging Cheltenham Local Plan and that in the meantime, planning officers should include the provision of allotments as a subject for discussion with developers at the pre-application stage.

3.33 *As reported in March 2014, the provision of allotments is now being discussed with developers at the planning stage, with the proposed development in South Cheltenham being a prime example. In Oakley, a planning application for the final stage of the former GCHQ site development incorporated additional parking for allotment holders in the event that future development of a site at Priors takes place. Previous discussions with developers of a care home facility in Windsor Street have resulted in the creation of 12 small allotment plots in the grounds of the care home, for the use of local residents. These are now up and running.*

3.34 To request Cabinet to investigate opportunities to work in partnership with organisations such as Cheltenham Borough Homes, GAVCA and CCP to facilitate a scheme to distribute surplus produce to those most in need in the town.

3.35 *As reported in March, allotment site wardens have been approached for their suggestions on how such a scheme could work. They have advised that there are usually only a very few months when allotment holders have surplus produce but a box could be located at the gate for donations to be collected. They felt that it would be difficult to ensure any kind of regularity of supply and that most allotment holders distribute their surplus among friends, family and neighbours.*

4. Additional information

- 4.1** In March 2014, it was reported that allotment demand had fallen in the last few years, both locally and nationally and that there were 300 people on a waiting list for a Cheltenham Borough Council allotment, mostly in the south of the Borough.
- 4.2** The waiting list has fallen further and there are now less than 200 people waiting for an allotment, ranging from two people at the Severn Road site, 9 people at the Terry Ashdown site to 40 for the Asquith Road site. This represents perhaps a one year wait, in comparison with a four year wait when lists were at their longest.
- 4.3** A survey of allotment holders will be carried out prior to a new allotment strategy being written in 2015. This should help the Council to identify areas of focus for the next allotment strategy and assess the allotment service, as experienced by the allotment tenants.

Report author	Contact officer: Fiona Warin, green space and allotment officer, fiona.warin@cheltenham.gov.uk 01242 774672
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Information/Discussion Paper

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

3 November 2014

LGA Peer Review

This note contains the information to keep Members informed of matters relating to the work of the Committee, but where no decisions from Members are needed.

1. Why has this come to scrutiny?

- 1.1 In September 2014 the council invited a peer challenge team led by LGA to visit the council for 3 days to provide an external 'health-check' of the organisation. The peer challenge team were asked specifically to look at the effectiveness of the council's governance arrangements and scrutiny.
- 1.2 In carrying out their review they spoke to members of the Cabinet, O&S, partners, service managers, the Executive Board and other officers so they got a cross section of views. They also examined documents relating to O&S such as the annual report and workplan.
- 1.3 The peer challenge team fed back their findings in a presentation to officers and members on 19 September 2014 at the end of their visit. They will be formally writing to the council setting out their conclusions and the Chief Executive/Leader have agreed that this will be made public on the council's website.
- 1.4 The challenge team made a number of recommendations and although the council is not bound in any way to action them, they can provide a valuable external insight into how the workings of the council could be improved. The Executive Board are already working on a draft action plan to address the issues raised.
- 1.5 As a number of recommendations related to scrutiny, this paper has come to O&S so they can review the feedback and decide whether there are any actions they would like to put in place.

2. Summary evidence/information

- 2.1 Overall the peer group concluded that scrutiny was working well under the new arrangements and these were a good starting point for further improvements to the scrutiny process.
- 2.2 They were impressed by the achievements to date by scrutiny task groups which were set out in the annual report.

- 2.3 They commended the arrangements whereby scrutiny was chaired by a member of the opposition. They also commented that the Cabinet Members seemed to have respect for the work of O&S.
- 2.4 One improvement area that they identified was in the area of the scrutiny workprogramme which they felt needed to be rationalised. They would encourage members to feed into the process and challenge themselves when devising the work programme as to whether scrutiny is the best route for resolving an issue. With limited resources they suggested there may be a need for scrutiny to focus on the high value areas.
- 2.5 One of the issues they picked up from officers was that scrutiny could be very demanding on officer time so the input needed from officers for any particular review needed to be taken note of at the workplanning stage.
- 2.6 They also recommended that the council needed to make more use of the skills of the members and engage a wider group of members into the scrutiny process.
- 3. Next Steps**
- 3.1 The committee may wish to take on board some of the recommendations and/or come up with actions to address some of the issues raised.
- 3.2 The committee may also want to look at other outcomes from the LGA peer review and identify other areas where O&S may be able to bring about further improvements in other areas e.g governance and decision making, project management etc.

Background Papers

Contact Officer	Rosalind Reeves, Democratic Services Manager Rosalind.reeves@cheltenham.gov.uk 01242 774937
Accountability	Cabinet Member Corporate Services Chair of Overview and Scrutiny
Scrutiny Function	O&S Committee

O&S Task group	Purpose	Update	Status summary	Agreed nominations/membership Chairs in bold	Facilitating Officer	Sponsoring Officer	Cabinet Member	Proposed by
KEY TO COLOURS	Not started STG							
	Standing STGs							
	Terms of Reference being drafted for agreement by O&S and prioritisation in the scrutiny workplan							
	Active STGs							
	Completed							
Review of Public Art Governance	To review the current structure of the Public Arts Panel and its accountability	The Cabinet Member requested O&S set up a STG to look at the governance of the Public Art Panel, its membership and terms of office and accountability and review the implementation of the recommendations from the previous scrutiny review on this topic reported to Cabinet in December 2011. Officers met on 29/9 to discuss approach. A workshop is being arranged. Legal advice is being sought regarding the decision making responsibility for Public Art.	Ongoing	Cllr Klara Sudbury, Helena McCloskey - if a task group goes ahead nominations from other groups will be sought	to be agreed		Healthy Lifestyles Cllr Rowena Hay	Cab Member
Pub Closures	Council on 26/3/2012 debated a motion proposed by Councillor Colin Hay regarding his concern about the number of pub closures across Gloucestershire and in Cheltenham in particular. Council passed a resolution to "Investigate the adoption of the Public House viability test and develop policies to protect public houses and community assets" and referred it to O&S.	O&S at its July meeting agreed to set up a STG to look at this issue which would then potentially produce recommendations which could be fed into the work on the Cheltenham Local Plan to be carried out by the JCS and Planning and Liaison Group. Other recommendations may arise. Membership complete. First meeting of group (to agree the draft ambitions and outcomes for the review) has yet to be arranged as awaiting confirmation of availability. The question of whether this is a priority topic was raised at the recent O&S briefing and this should be discussed at the next meeting of the committee (03/11).	On hold	Cllr Colin Hay, Paul Baker, Anne Regan and John Payne	to be agreed		Development and Safety Cllr McKinlay	Cllr Colin Hay
Cheltenham Railway Station	To review the issues arising from the renewal of the Great Western Franchise in 2016. This would include understanding how this links with the proposals to refurbish the station.	O&S agreed to establish the STG. The first meeting was arranged for 13/10 but was subsequently deferred. Jeremy Williamson (Cheltenham Development Task Force) will attend O&S on 3/11 to provide update on franchise renewal/refurbishment proposals.	Ongoing	Cllr Flo Clucas, Dan Murch, Roger Whyborn, and Max Wilkinson, John Payne and Chris Mason	to be agreed		Leader Cllr Jordan and Development and Safety, Cllr McKinlay	Leader, Cllr Jordan
Cycling and Walking	To review the facilities for cycling and walking in the town.	O&S at its July meeting agreed to set up a STG to look at this issue. The timing was appropriate as any new road networks in Cheltenham currently being planned should be designed to facilitate cycling and walking. First meeting held on the 15/10 and task group agreed approach. Next meeting to be confirmed (possibly 6/11).	Ongoing	Cllrs Tim Harman, Dan Murch, Suzanne Willimans, Max Wilkinson and Adam Lillywhite	to be agreed		Development and Safety Cllr McKinlay	Cllr Wilkinson
Budget scrutiny working group	The working group's role is to develop the budget process, support the development of Members' scrutiny role and to consider ideas from Members for reducing the budget gap.	The working group has a schedule of meetings arranged throughout the year. The new members held their first meeting on 10 July when the Chief Executive attended to outline his vision and the group considered the financial implications of Vision 20/20.	Ongoing	Cllrs Babbage, Nelson, Payne, Thornton, Whyborn, Wilkinson Cabinet Member Finance to attend by invitation.	Rosalind Reeves, Democratic Services Manager	Mark Sheldon	Finance Cllr Rawson	Council

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O&S Committee 2014/15 work plan

Item	Outcome	What is required?	Lead Officer
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Meeting Date: 3 November (report deadline: 22 October)			
LGA Peer Review	Feedback from the peer review relating to scrutiny and how it operates in the borough	Comments	Rosalind Reeves, Democratic Services Manager
Allotments STG	Progress update on STG recommendations (March 2013)	Comments	Fiona Warin, Green Space and Allotment Officer
Cheltenham Spa Railway Station	Presentation on the franchise renewal and refurbishment proposals	Comment	Jeremy Williamson, Cheltenham Development Task Force
Meeting date: 12 January 2015 (report deadline: 30 December)			
Budget recommendations (2015-16)	Review recommendations of the budget scrutiny working group	Comments/ Decision	Mark Sheldon, Director of Resources
Meeting date: 2 March (report deadline: 18 February)			
Draft Corporate Strategy 2020	Consider the draft Corporate Strategy 2020 and comment as necessary	Comments	Richard Gibson, Strategy and Engagement Manager
Quarter 3 performance review	Consider quarter 3 performance and comment as necessary	Comments	Richard Gibson, Strategy and Engagement Manager
Meeting date: 27 April (report deadline: 15 April)			
Dog Fouling STG	12 month follow up on recommendations (April 2014)	Comments	tbc
Deprivation STG	6 month follow up on recommendations (October 2014)	Comments	Cllr Rowena Hay, Cabinet Member Healthy Lifestyles
Meeting date: 29 July (report deadline: 19 June)			
End of year performance review	Consider the end of year performance and comment as necessary	Tbc	Richard Gibson, Strategy and Engagement Manager

Item	Outcome	What is required?	Lead Officer
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Items for future meetings (a date to be established)			
Cheltenham integrated transport	Look at issues (if any) that are identified by various scrutiny task groups once they have completed their work and consider how to take them forward	Tbc	Tbc
Severn Trent – lessons learnt	Invite Severn Trent back once works in Cheltenham are complete to discuss lessons learnt	Presentation	Paul Evans, Severn Trent

Annual Items		
Budget recommendations	January	Chair, Budget Scrutiny Working Group
Draft Corporate Strategy	March	Richard Gibson, Strategy and Engagement Manager
Quarter 3 performance review	March	Richard Gibson, Strategy and Engagement Manager
End of year performance review	June/July	Richard Gibson, Strategy and Engagement Manager
Non scrutiny member working groups update	September	Democratic Services Manager
Quarter 2 performance review	November	Richard Gibson, Strategy and Engagement Manager